

MORE PAGES OF STORIES

MAY NO. 40

LASH LARUE

WESTERN

10¢

A FAWCETT PUBLICATION



*The King
of the Bullwhip*

BATTLES THE

**SHANGHAIED
RUSTLERS!**

FIERY CHARIOT

By Westbrook Wilson



THE BACK ROOM was illuminated only by a flickering candle. The blind on the one window was drawn down tight. The four men sat hunched around the little table and spoke low, barely above a whisper.

"Are you sure there'll be gold on that stage, Greel?" one man asked.

"Sure, I'm sure," responded Greel, a dark-skinned, black-haired man, who spoke with an authority that indicated he was the leader of the group. "They've signed up Sure Shot Tompkins as messenger, and he never rides guard unless there's something in the load worth guarding! He's expensive!"

"Yeh, and he's dangerous," grumbled somebody. "He didn't come by that handle of 'Sure Shot' accidentally. That hombre can shoot off a gnat's mustache!"

"Sure enough," said another. "Every owlhoot who ever tried to hold up one of his stages is either in jail or the hospital!"

Greel snarled, "If you lily-livered sidewinders will shut up a minute and listen to me, I'll tell you my foolproof plan for taking care of Mr. Sure Shot. Here's what we do:

"Shorty will be lying low on Overhang Rock when the stage passes underneath it. He'll push a bundle of burning, oil-soaked rags down on top of the stage. The driver and guard won't see it. They'll both be facing forward, wondering about the shot they'll hear farther up the road. By the time they notice the fire, it'll be too hot to put out by spittin' on. Then what'll they do?"

"Cut off the road and head for the river. That's all they can do."

"Right. And there's a heavy brush cover along the river bank. That's where me and Jake and Idaho will be lying low. Now the driver and the guard will both be scooping up river water to put out that fire, likely with their hats. That's when we strike. Do you get it? Even Sure Shot can't shoot anybody with a hatful of water!"

The stage was approaching Overhang Rock. Sure Shot Tompkins, a tall, good-natured fellow with a freckled face and sandy hair, sat relaxed with his rifle easily cradled. He turned to the driver and drawled, "You nervous, Joe, carryin' this big mess of gold?"

"Nervous? Shucks no! Not with you along!"

"I'm nervous," said Sure Shot, in the same, slow easy way he always talked. "I always get nervous as blazes on a job like this. Maybe it's just as well. Keeps my mind buzzing thinking up just what to do in case of an emergency."

Joe didn't reply. He was busy sawing on the leather to slow the horses for the slight curve that led under Overhang Rock. As the stage passed under, Shorty handled his assignment perfectly. The bundle of blazing rags fell with a very slight plop to the top of the coach, behind the box. In the clatter of hoofs and creaking of springs, neither Sure Shot nor Joe heard it!

Wind blew the smoke and flames backward, away from them, so the fire had a very good start before Sure Shot, turning, noticed it. "Head for the river, Joe," he drawled. "We're on fire!" Joe took one startled look backward, then cracked his whip.

(Continued on inside back cover)

The following outstanding magazines are easily identified on their covers by the words A FAWCETT PUBLICATION.

CAPT. MARVEL ADVENTURES • THE MARVEL FAMILY • LASH LaRUE WESTERN • FAWCETT'S FUNNY ANIMALS
BATTLE STORIES • ROCKY LAKE WESTERN • HOPALONG CASSIDY • BOB CAMERON WESTERN • SIX-GUN HEROES
TEX BITTER WESTERN • SOLDIER COMICS

Every effort is made to insure that these comic magazines contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.

W. H. Fawcett, Jr., President



Lash LaRUE in The SHANGHAIED RUSTLERS



Chapter I THE MAN-MADE STAMPEDE

YOU'RE THE SMARTEST AND TOUGHEST ROWING MARSHAL OF THEM ALL— LASH LaRUE, THE TWO-GUN KING OF THE BULLWHIP! YOU START OUT TO LOOK FOR SOME RUSTLED CATTLE AND THEN OUT OF A CLEAR BLUE SKY YOU FIND YOURSELF LOOKING FOR A MISSING JASPER! THEN SUDDENLY, IT HITS YOU THAT BOTH QUESTS MAY REALLY BE ONE, BUT TO PROVE THAT YOU'VE GOT TO GET BY THE WOLF PACK OUTSIDE THE HIDDEN RANCH! BUT JUST HOW DO YOU DO THAT? IF YOU'RE LASH LaRUE, YOU MIGHT HAVE THE ANSWER! READ ON FOR THE STARTLING, SENSATIONAL ADVENTURE, 'SHANGHAIED RUSTLERS'!

AT THE CHIEF MARSHAL'S OFFICE IN LARADO...



WELL, WELL, WELL! IF IT ISN'T JED TOMPKINS, THE BIGGEST CATTLE RANCHER IN THESE PARTS! TO WHAT DO WE OWE THIS UNEXPECTED VISIT?

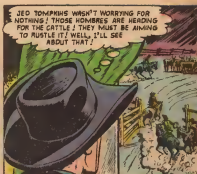
I HOPE ONLY TO A SILLY WHIM OF MINE!

AS YUH KNOW, CHIEF, TONIGHT'S THE BIG DANCE, AND THAR ISN'T A MAN, WOMAN OR CHILD IN LARADO WHO ISN'T DYING TO GO! USUALLY I LEAVE ONLY ONE MAN TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE RANCH AND LET THE REST OF MY HANDS HAVE THE NIGHT OFF!

THAT'S WHAT MOST EVERYBODY DOES IN THESE PARTS! I DON'T SEE WHAT'S BOTHERING YUH!







I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU KNEW I WAS HERE, BUT IF YOU WERE SMART ENOUGH TO DISCOVER THAT YOU MUSTN'T BE THE ONLY ONE KEEPING AN EYE ON ME, THERE'RE PROBABLY OTHERS SURROUNDING THE HOUSE, TOO!



THE WINDOW WOULD NO DOUBT BE A SAFER PLACE TO MAKE MY EXIT THAN THE DOOR!



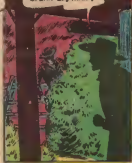
THERE'S ONE HERE, TOO!



NOW TO SEE WHO ELSE THEY HAVE GARRING THE HOUSE! IT'S SO DARK I SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE GETTING CLOSE TO WHATEVER HOMBRE IT MIGHT BE BEFORE HE RECOGNIZES I'M NOT ONE OF THE RUSTLING PARTY!



WHO'S THAT APPROACHING? SPEAK UP, MAN!



IT'S THE SAND MAN! I CAME TO PUT YOU TO SLEEP!

POW!

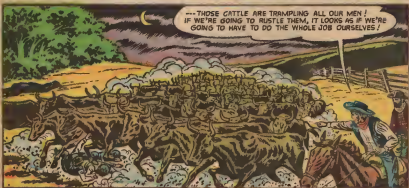
BAM!



NOW TO SEE WHAT I CAN DO ABOUT STOPPING THE REST OF THESE RUSTLERS! THEY MUST BE HEADING THE GATTLE TOWARDS THE TRAIL!







NOT ALL BY OURSELVES---
DON'T FORGET WE STILL HAVE
THREE OTHER MEN WHO ARE
SUPPOSED TO BE GUARDING
THE HOUSE! AS SOON AS WE
GET THE CATTLE UNDER CONTROL,
WE'LL GET THEM AND
BE ON OUR WAY!



SHORTLY AFTER...
WELL, WHAR'S
HUTCH
AND THE
OTHER
TWO?



THE THREE
OF THEM WERE
KNOCKED OUT!
THAT'S HOW THAT
LAWDOG GOT OUT OF
THE HOUSE! I TRIED BUT I
CAN'T BRING THEM TO! IF WE'RE
GOING TO GET THESE CATTLE
OUT OF MYAR, WE'LL HAVE TO
DO IT OURSELVES!

I WAS HOPING TO GET THESE
CATTLE ACROSS THE BORDER,
BUT WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO
DO IT OURSELVES! I RECKON
WE'LL HAVE TO HEAD FER MY
HIDE-OUT IN THE HIDDEN
VALLEY! WE'LL KEEP THEM
THAR FER THE TIME BEING!



LATER, WHEN THE DANCE IS OVER...

HE'S COMING TO! LUCKY FER HIM THAT
BULLET ONLY GRAZED HIS SKULL!



AND AS LASH LARUE REGAINS CONSCIOUSNESS...

THAT'S RIGHT, LASH!
BESIDES THOSE TRAMPLED
HOMBRES OUTSIDE, THESE
WERE THE ONLY THREE
WE FOUND!

THAT MEANS THAT VARMINT
CALLED TRENCHY AND HIS HENCHMAN, CHET,
MANAGED TO RUSTLE THE
CATTLE OFF THE SPREAD
BY THEMSELVES!



THE LAW WILL GO
A LOT EASIER ON
YOU THREE IF
YOU'LL UNBUTTON
YOUR LIPS! WHERE
DID THOSE
HOMBRES
TAKE THE
CATTLE?

THEY
WERE
AIMING
TO SELL
THEM
ACROSS
THE
BORDER!

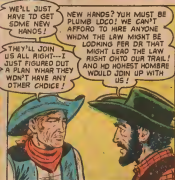
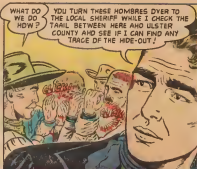
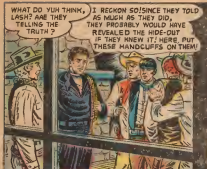
THEY'LL NEVER MANAGE
TO HERD ALL THOSE CATTLE
ACROSS THE BORDER BY
THEMSELVES! THEY MUST
HAVE SOME PLACE CLOSE
BY WHERE THEY'RE AIMING
TO HIDE THEM OUT UNTIL
THEY CAN ROUND UP A
NEW PACK OF VARMINTS
TO HELP THEM! NOW JUST
WHERE IS THIS PLACE?

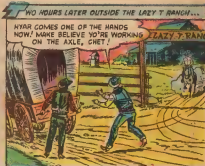
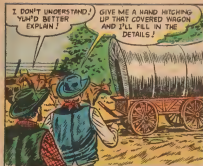
LOOK,
LARUE,
WE DON'T
WANT TO
SIT IN
JAIL ANY
LONGER
THAN WE
HAVE TO!
BUT I TELL
YUH WE DON'T
KNOW!

DO YOU
MEAN TO SAY
YOU BELONG
TO TRENCHY'S
GANG AND
YOU DON'T
KNOW WHERE
HIS HIDE-OUT
IS?

IT'S THE TRUTH,
LARUE! WE'VE
BEEN THAR, BUT
IT'S SUCH A TRICKY
PLACE WE DON'T
EXACTLY KNOW WHAR
IT IS! IT'S A RANCH
IN SOME HIDDEN VALLEY
BETWEEN LARADO AND
ULSTER COUNTY, BUT
TRENCHY IS THE ONLY
ONE WHO REALLY
KNOWS WHAR
IT IS!

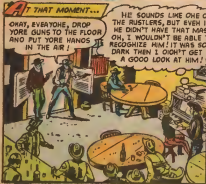






BUT AS LARRY BROWN BENDS OVER TO SEE WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WAGON...





BUT THE NEXT MOVE COULD BE...DEATH! READ ON FOR CHAPTER II OF 'THE SHANGHAIED RUSTLERS'!



Lash LARUE

in The **SHANCHAIED RUSTLERS**

Chapter II THE WOLF PACK

ALL I HAVE TO MY NAME IS THE FEW DOLLARS I HAVE IN MY POCKET; PLEASE DON'T TAKE IT FROM ME!

WE'RE NOT INTERESTED IN ANY PENNY ANTE WE COULD PICK UP HYAR! ALL OF YUH WHO ARE COWHANDS, LINE UP ON THE LEFT!

WHY SHOULD ANYONE BE INTERESTED IN WHO'S A COWHAND? I WONDER IF THIS COULD HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THOSE RUSTLED CATTLE I'M LOOKING FOR! I'LL JUST HAVE TO PLAY ALONG!

THAT'S NOT AS MANY HYAR AS I WAS COUNTING ON, BUT THEY'LL HAVE TO DO! ALL OF YUH MARCH OUT! THE REST OF YUH STAY JUST WHAR YUH ARE WITHOUT MOVING FOR TEN MINUTES! IF YUH MAKE ONE MOVE TOWARDS THE DOOR, OUR MEN OUTSIDE WILL SHOOT YUH DOWN!

WE DON'T HAVE ANY MEN OUTSIDE BUT THAT BLUFF SHOULD KEEP THEM FROM FOLLOWING US!

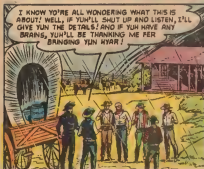
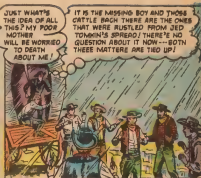
NO ONE NOTICED THE BULLWHIP! I ONLY HOPE I CAN SLIP IT UNDER MY SHIRT BEFORE THEY DO!

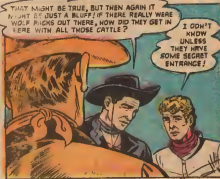
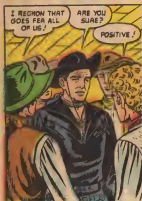
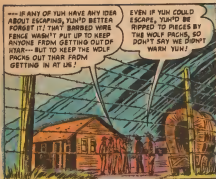
NOW ALL OF YUH CLIMB INTO THE BACK OF THAT WAGON AND SAVE YORE QUESTIONS UNTIL YUH GET WHAR I'M TAKING YUH!

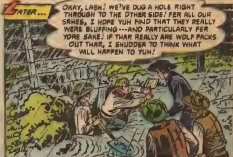
I'LL KEEP THEM COVERED! YUH DRIVE THE WAGON!

FROM MRS. BROWN'S DESCRIPTION, THAT POOR HONKIE IN THE CORNER MUST BE HER MISSING SON, LARRY! FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT THIS WAS TIED UP WITH THE RUSTLERS, BUT THIS THROWS A NEW ANGLE ON WHAT'S GOING ON—UNLESS BOTH OF THEM ARE TIED UP TOGETHER!

IF THESE ARE THE RUSTLERS, THEY'RE PROBABLY HEADING FOR THAT HIDDEN RANCH HUTCH MENTIONED! IF THERE WERE ONLY SOME WAY TO SEE WHERE WE'RE GOING!







(GULP!) THEY SPOTTED ME ALREADY—AND I DON'T EVEN HAVE A SIX-SHOOTER TO PROTECT MYSELF!



MY ONLY CHANCE IS TO SCARE THEM OFF UNTIL I CAN GET BACK INSIDE THAT BARBED WIRE ENCLOSURE!



THIS DOESN'T REALLY SCARE THEM AWAY, BUT IT DOES MAKE THEM STOP EVERY FEW SECONDS! I ONLY HOPE I CAN KEEP IT UP UNTIL I GET BACK TO THE BARBED WIRE FENCE!



(GULP!) THEY WEREN'T LYING! THAR REALLY ARE WOLVES OUT THAR! PICK UP WHATEVER ROCKS YUH CAN FIND AND START TOSSING THEM AT THE WOLVES! WE'VE GOT TO HOLD THEM OFF LONG ENOUGH FER LASH TO GET BACK INSIDE THE HOLE!



KEEP IT UP, MEN! I SHOULD BE THROUGH HERE IN A MINUTE --- IF ONE DOESN'T GRAB HOLD OF MY LEG BEFORE THEN!



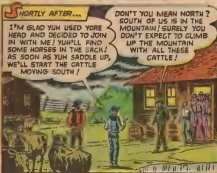
QUICK, CLOSE UP THE HOLE BEFORE THEY TRY TO GET THROUGH!



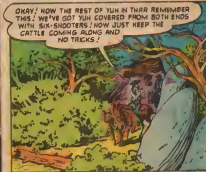
THE RUSTLERS MUST HAVE A SECRET ENTRANCE TO THIS HIDDEN RANCH! THE QUESTION IS WHETHER WE CAN FIND IT BEFORE IT STOPS RAINING!

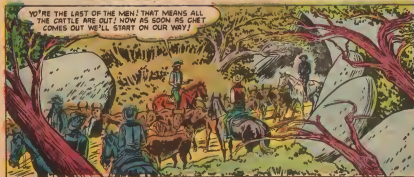


THAT'S NO USE OF YORE LOOKING FER IT! NO ONE KNOWS WHAR THAT SECRET ENTRANCE IS EXCEPT ME--









CHET'S NOT COMING OUT! NOW
DROP THAT SIX-SHOOTER AND
PUT YOUR HANDS UP!



I SAID IF YUH TRIED ANY TRICKS I'D
KILL YUH! I'M NOT AFRAID OF THAT
SIX-SHOOTER! THAT'S NO ONE FASTER
ON THE TRIGGER IN THESE PARTS
THAN LASH LARUE---AND SINCE
HE'S NOT HYAR I'VE
GOT NOTHING TO
WORRY ABOUT!

BUT THAT'S
WHERE YOU'RE
WRONG! I AM
LASH LARUE!



WITH THOSE WORDS, TWO
SHOTS RING OUT!



AS THE SMOKE CLEARS...

YUH PLUGGED MY
TRIGGER HANO! I RECKON
I KNOW WHEN I'M
BEATEN!

YOU MAY NOT HAVE
REALIZED IT, BUT YOU WERE
BEATEN THE DAY YOU DECIDED
TO BECOME AN OUTLAW!
NOW ONE OF YOU MEN GO
BACK AND DRAG HIS PARTNER
OUT OF THE TUNNEL!



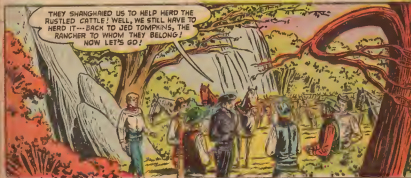
SHORTLY AFTER...

I RECKON I OWE
YUH AN APOLOGY!
I SEE YUH WERE
REALLY ON THE
LEVEL!

YOU CAN SAVE THE
APOLOGY! WE STILL
HAVE A JOB TO DO!



THEY SHANGHAIED US TO HELP HERD
THE RUSTLED CATTLE! WELL, WE STILL HAVE TO
HERD IT---BACK TO JED TOMPKINS, THE
RANCHER TO WHOM THEY BELONG!
NOW LET'S GO!





HOPALONG CASSIDY

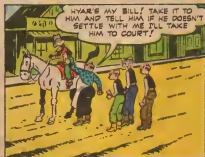
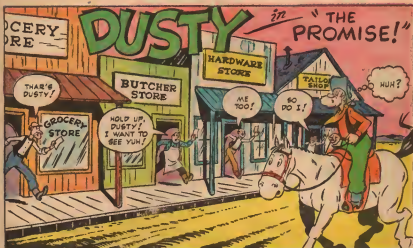
starring William Boyd

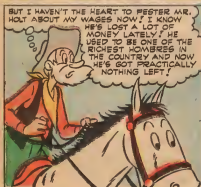
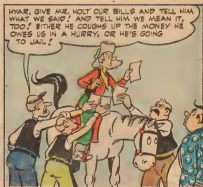
**HISTORY'S GREATEST
COWBOY**

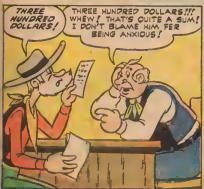
READ HIS SENSATIONAL ADVENTURES
EVERY MONTH!

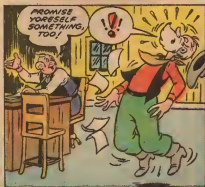
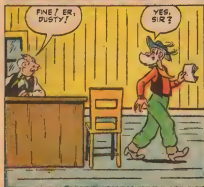
10¢ ON NEWSSTANDS EVERYWHERE 10¢











BIG BOW and LITTLE ARROW

A FRICTIONAL FRACTION

(SIGH) ME SAD
LITTLE ARROW!

WHY,
BIG BOW?

PEOPLE SAY ME NO SMART!
EVERYBODY CALL ME
BIG DOPPE!

"DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT
PEOPLE SAY, BIG BOW! THE ONLY
TROUBLE WITH YOU IS THAT
YOUR BRAIN IS TOO TENSE!"

HUH? MY BRAIN
IS TOO
TENSE?

THAT'S
RIGHT...

---YOUR BRAIN IS
TWO-TENTHS THE SIZE
OF A NORMAL BRAIN!

(OUP)!!!

MOLASSES MOUTH



THE QUESTION OF THE AGES

YUM MUST BE THE
HAPPIEST HOMBRE
IN THE COUNTRY,
MOLASSES MOUTH!

HUH? THE
HAPPIEST
HOMBRE?

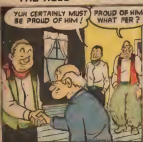
THAT'S RIGHT! YORE
GRANDFATHER IS
CELEBRATING HIS
ONE HUNDRETH
BIRTHDAY TODAY!

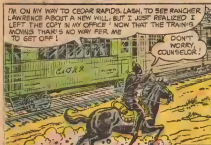
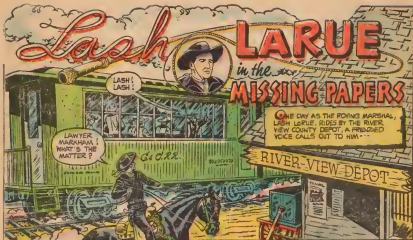
YUP,
THE OLD
TIMER IS A
HUNDRED
YEARS
OLD!

YUM CERTAINLY MUST
BE PROUD OF HIM!

PROUD OF HIM?
WHAT FER?

SHUCKS, HE HASN'T DONE ANYTHING
EXCEPT GROW OLD AND LOOK
HOW LONG IT TOOK HIM
TO DO THAT!





UNCLE, UNCLE!
ARE YUN OKAY?

I RECKON I AM, HERKY, BUT DON'T
PRETEND THAT YORE CONCERNED!
I KNOW THIS BANISTER BREAKING
WAS NO ACCIDENT!



THAT BANISTER WAS SAVED IN
HALF! OTHERWISE IT WOULDN'T
HAVE BROKEN SO EASILY!

BUT WHO WOULD DO
SUCH A THING?



YUN WOULD; THIS IS JUST
ANOTHER ONE OF THE
MANY FUNNY ACCIDENTS
THAT HAVE ALMOST
CLAIMED MY LIFE IN
THE LAST MONTH!
EVIDENTLY YUN THINK
IF I DIE YU'LL INHERIT
MY RANCH AND ALL MY
MONEY, SINCE YORE
MY ONLY LIVING KIN;
WELL, YORE WRONG!

YUN MISJUDGE ME,
UNCLE, TO THINK
THAT I WOULD DO
ANYTHING TO HARM
YU! BUT I DON'T
UNDERSTAND YUN
WHEN YU SAY I'M
WRONG TO THINK
I WOULD ONE DAY
INHERIT ALL YORE
MONEY AND THIS
RANCH; AFTER ALL,
I AM YORE ONLY
RELATIVE!

THAT'S RIGHT,
HERKY, BUT YORE
WASTING YORE
TIME SINCE I
ORDERED MY
LAWYER TO CHANGE
MY WILL! I'M
LEAVING EVERYTHING
TO CHARITY! IN
FACT, COUNSELLOR
MARSHAM IS ON
HIS WAY NYAR,
RIGHT NOW WITH
THE COPY OF MY
NEW WILL!

(GULP!) THIS IS A BAD
TURN OF EVENTS! I
JUST HIRED TWO
HOMBRES TO KNOCK
OFF MY UNCLE IF
THE RAIL DIDN'T
DO THE TRICK! NOW
I'VE GOT TO FIND
THEM, AND STOP
THEM! IF THEY
SHOULD KILL HIM
BEFORE I GET A
CHANCE TO CHANGE
THE NEW WILL, I'LL
BE LEFT WITH NOTHING!

BEING NO TIME, HERKY
LAWRENCE MAKES A
FRANTIC SEARCH OF ALL
THE GAMBLING PARLORS
AND SALOONS IN CEDAR
RAPIDS, BUT---

(GULP!) NO SIGN OF
THOSE TWO HOMBRES
YET!



BUT FINALLY---

AM, THAR
YUN ARE!
I'VE BEEN
LOOKING
EVERY-
WHERE
FER YU
THO! I'VE
GOT TO
TALK TO
YU!

WE SAW YORE UNCLE
FISHING DOWN AT
THE POND AND BE-
FORE HE KNEW IT WE
SHOWED HIM UNDER!



YORE PORE
UNCLE'S DEAD,
HERKY, AND NOW
YORE A RICH
HOMBRE!

AND DON'T FORGET,
HERKY, WE GET
HALF OF YORE
INHERITANCE FER
DOING THE JOB!



YU MEAN YU
GET HALF OF
NOTHING!

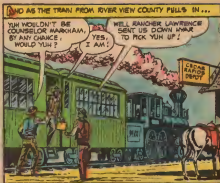
WHAT
DO YU
MEAN?

AND AFTER HERKY LAWRENCE EXPLAINS,

IF ONLY I COULD
HAVE STOPPED
YU BEFORE, YU
KILLED MY UNCLE.
I MIGHT HAVE
BEEN ABLE TO
FIGURE SOME
WAY TO GET HIM
TO MAKE OUT
ANOTHER WILL IN
MY FAVOR; NOW
IT'S TOO LATE!

MAYBE IT WILL STILL
WORK OUT, HERKY!
ALL WE HAVE TO
DO IS DESTROY
THAT WILL BEFORE
ANYONE ELSE CAN
SEE IT, AND AS
YORE THE ONLY
LIVING KIN THE
LAW WILL SEE
THAT YU GET
THE INHERITANCE!





SHORTLY AFTER AS THE ROYAL MARSHAL APPROACHES THE CEDAR RAPIDS JAILHOUSE ---

MY NAME IS TOMS ; I WORK PER RANCHER LAWRENCE ! THE LAWYER MARKHAM WENT OUT TO THE SPREAD INSTEAD OF TO THE JAILHOUSE AND ASKED THAT I PICK YUH UP AND BRING YUH THAR, TOO !

JAIL

SHERIFF OFFICE

THANKS !

AS LASH LARUE IS LED TOWARDS HENRY LAWRENCE'S ROOM ---

HEY ! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE ?

IF YUH DON'T WANT US TO KILL MARKHAM, YUH BETTER DO JUST AS I TELL YUH ! HAND OVER THOSE PAPERS HE ASKED YUH TO BRING HIM !

YUH KEEP THAT GUN AIMED AT LASH, OSSER. I'LL REMOVE ME SIX-SHOOTERS IN THE MEANWHILE !

MY UNCLE DON'T LIE ! ACCORDING TO THIS NEW WILL HE DID LEAVE ALL HIS MONEY AND PROPERTY TO CHARITY !

AND THAT'S NOTHING YUH CAN DO ABOUT IT NOW THAT HE'S DEAD !

BUT THAR IS ---

YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE OUT A NEW WILL AND WITH LASH LARUE'S SIGNATURE AS A WITNESS NO ONE'S GOING TO DOUBT THAT JED LAWRENCE'S SIGNATURE IS A PHONEY !

NEVER !

SMACK !

I RECKON YOU BETTER DO AS THESE VARMINTS SAY, MARKHAM ! WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE !

AND AFTER THE NEW WILL IS SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED ---

SO LONG NOW ! AND I WOULDN'T GO TRYING TO MAKE UP ANY PLANS ABOUT HOW YORE GOING TO STOP US, BECAUSE YORE NOT GOING TO LIVE THAT LONG !

WHY DID YUH ASK ME TO MAKE OUT THAT NEW WILL, LASH ?

BECAUSE IF YOU DIDN'T THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU ! BUT AS LONG AS WE'RE ALIVE WE'VE GOT A CHANCE TO UPSET THEIR PLANS !

BUT ---

WITH ALL THE MONEY YORE GOING TO INHERIT, HERRY, YUH CAN AFFORD TO BUILD A NEW RANCH HOUSE ! AND IF ANYONE SHOULD HAPPEN TO LOOK PER LARUE OR MARKHAM, IT'LL LOOK AS IF THEY WERE BURNED TO DEATH ACCIDENTALLY !

MEANWHILE ---

THE DOOR'S LOCKED AND THE WINDOWS ARE ALL BARRED ! I RECKON WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE OUR OWN EXIT !

Click !



Fiery Chariot

(Continued from inside front cover)

Sure Shot cupped his hands and said something directly into Joe's ear. Joe heard and nodded. The idea sounded crazy to him, but such was his faith in the guard, he would obey without question.

Then Tompkins crawled up and back toward the flames. "Thank heaven we haven't any passengers," he thought. The stage was rocking and swaying over uneven ground now, heading down the slope toward the river. Once a bad lurch nearly threw Tompkins off, but he hung grimly. As they passed through the brush at river side, he kicked loose a chunk of flaming stuff.

Lead horses were splashing into the water when he jumped. Sure Shot had abandoned the rifle when he started his crawl along the top, but he still had the pair of six-guns, holstered at his sides. He landed in a couple of inches of water at the very edge of the stream.

Meanwhile, Joe had taken the flaming coach to mid-river, where it was hubcap deep. He threw on the brake and pulled the reins sharply. This seemed crazy to him, but it was what Sure Shot had told him to do. The coach swayed and fell over on its side as Joe jumped free. There was a hiss as flames from the burning top hit the water. Joe whipped off his big hat and began scooping water to throw on the rest of the fire.

The horses were fidgety but well-trained. A few soothing words from Joe quieted them and they quit tugging, standing more or less quiet in the water.

Joe was too busy to notice at first that the brush at streamside had suddenly become a flash of brilliant orange. He was too busy to wonder what his companion was doing. It was

the first howl of astonishment and pain that made him look up.

He saw three men jump up from the blazing brush and run screaming to the river. These were Greel and Jake and Idaho. None was really burned—singed and scared would be the words.

After they had floundered into the water, a drawling voice said, "Now get your hands up, all of you!"

Jake exclaimed, "It's Sure Shot!" He raised his hands.

Idaho did likewise, begging, "Don't plug me!"

Greel snarled and reached for his holster. Sure Shot squeezed. The holster was cut cleanly from the belt and fell with a splash into the river, weighted down by its cargo of one Colt .45.

"Raise 'em!" said Tompkins.

Greel had no choice.

Miraculously, the stage had suffered no serious damage in tipping over. The soft mud of the river bottom had acted as a cushion. With his guns as the conviners, Sure Shot made the outlaws do the heavy work of setting the vehicle upright now that the fire was extinguished. Then the three were shoved inside the coach and tied securely.

Just before he closed the door, Tompkins said, "I hope that fire don't break out again. We've got passengers now and they'd be burned to a crisp." Greel and his companions shivered.

THE GOLD was safely delivered, then the outlaws were jailed. At least one of them told of Shorty's part in the crime, and Shorty was arrested next day.

Sure Shot and Joe were having some hot, black coffee together. Sure Shot said, "I think, Joe, I'll get into some other kind of business. This work makes me too nervous."

"Yeh," said Joe, sipping his coffee. "I can see that."

THE END

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